



**Assurance Protocols for
Certification Bodies, Clients and
Oversight Body**
December 2023

Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef
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Calgary, AB T2E 7H7

The CRSB reserves the right to update this document at its sole discretion at any time for continued relevance and effectiveness. At a minimum, it is reviewed every five years in conjunction with the regular management review of the Framework and updated as needed.

It is the user's responsibility to ensure that they are using the most current version of the document maintained on the CRSB Certified website. www.crsbcertified.ca

Responsibility for this Document

The CRSB Sustainable Beef Framework Committee is responsible for the maintenance of this document, as well as its interpretation and implementation. Any comments on this document can be submitted to info@crsbcertified.ca.

The CRSB is not liable for any costs, or any potential, real or estimated loss of earnings resulting from any actions taken by a person or entity related to their participation in the program, including, without limitation, any actions taken prior to applying to become a program participant. The full onus of responsibility for compliance with the Assurance Protocols rests solely with the Client. For greater certainty, in no event shall the CRSB, its employee, or any other third party engaged by CRSB, bear any responsibility or liability for a Licensee's compliance with any Assurance Protocol requirements.

Versions Published

Version no.	Publication date	Description
1.0	December 7, 2017	First published final version
1.1	August 28, 2018	Clarifications in mass balance and addition of group level
2.0	December 21, 2023	Five-year review and update – new sections on data, complaints and equivalency

Validity and Transition

The CRSB Communications, Claims and Labelling Manual version 2.0 will come into effect December 21, 2023, and replaces all previous versions.

The transition period is six months. By the end of the transition period, all participants shall have been evaluated against these updated requirements.

Translation Disclaimer

The official language of this manual is English. For any questions related to the precise

meaning of the information between copies, versions or translations, please refer to the official English version for clarification.

Any discrepancies or differences in meaning due to translation are not binding and have no effect for auditing or certification purposes.

More Information

For more information about the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef visit the website crsb.ca.

For more information about the CRSB Certified Sustainable Beef Framework visit the website crsbcertified.ca.

Comments or questions about this document can be submitted to:

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1.0 Introduction

The Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB) is a multi-stakeholder organization focused on advancing sustainability efforts within the Canadian beef industry. The CRSB's mission is to advance, measure and communicate continuous improvement in sustainability of the Canadian beef value chain.

The CRSB has developed the [*Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*](#) (“the Framework”) for stakeholders in the value chain to produce and source beef from CRSB Certified Operations. The purpose of the Framework is multi-faceted due to a number of factors. Consumer interest in supporting sustainable food systems is growing, the agriculture supply chain is interested in sharing scientifically robust information with an increasingly removed consumer, and retail and food service companies are grappling with balancing consumer interest, marketing needs, corporate social responsibility and investor expectations. At the same time non-governmental organizations are keenly interested in supporting sustainable agriculture systems and ensuring high standards of animal care are being attained. Given these numerous factors, the Framework was developed with multiple purposes in mind as outlined below:

- Advance beef sustainability in Canada
- Recognize leadership and best practice within the industry
- Ensure a consistent, robust and meaningful definition of sustainable production in Canada
- Avoid duplicating efforts to define and verify sustainable operations
- Support supply chains interested in making meaningful sustainable sourcing commitments and subsequent communications
- Enable consumers to purchase sustainably sourced product
- Support the understanding of sustainable beef production in Canada

1.1 Guiding Principles

Through all levels of implementation of the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* the CRSB will be led by the following principles¹:

- **Credible** to all stakeholders securing trust through robust assurances, transparency, inclusivity and rigorous scientific review
- **Effective** in driving the advancement and understanding of sustainable beef production
- **Economically viable** for the CRSB to manage and stakeholders to use
- **Valuable** to industry participants and consumers
- **Aligned** with the Five Principles of Sustainable Beef as set by the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef

¹ There is no significance to the order of the principles.

Wherever possible, the CRSB has followed the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling (ISEAL) Codes of Good Practices throughout the Framework development process.

1.2 Purpose

The Framework's Assurance Protocols for Certification Bodies, Clients and Oversight Bodies [this document] includes guidance and requirements for the certification process. This technical document has been developed for use by the oversight body, certification bodies and clients.

Specifically, the purpose of this CRSB Assurance Protocols document include:

- Establish requirements for certification to ensure consistency in assessments by qualified auditors and seeks to achieve equitable access to certification services across Canada.
- Describes how Certification Bodies (CBs) assess and grant certificates.
- Establish requirements for oversight of CBs by the CRSB appointed oversight body.
- Provide the transparency that is required of an international certification scheme for it to have credibility with potential stakeholders, including governments, international governmental bodies (e.g. regulatory bodies, managers), CBs, supply chain actors, non-governmental organizations and consumers.
- Provide documentation to assure long-term continuity and consistency of the delivery of CRSB certification.
- Describe the equivalency process for recognizing other schemes.

1.3 Definitions

Audit – Systematic, documented process for obtaining records, statements of fact or other relevant information and assessing them objectively to determine the extent to which specified requirements are fulfilled (aka: inspection, evaluation, verification). (adapted from ISO 17000)

Certification Body – an organization approved by the CRSB, recommended by the Oversight Body, to conduct certification services on the CRSB's behalf.

Chain of Custody – the custodial sequence that occurs as ownership or control of the material supply is transferred from one custodian to another in the supply chain. Documenting chain of custody describes the list of all organizations (supply chains) that take ownership or control of a product during production, processing, shipping and retail (physically and/or administratively) (from ISEAL Alliance, 2016).

Client – The person or enterprise that is seeking assurance of their conformity with the CRSB Standard(s). This includes beef producers and primary processors. Participating Operators are also referred to as Clients for the purposes of this

document.

Delivery Contract – a document that outlines which activities the CRSB is responsible for delivering and which activities a Certification Body is responsible for delivering in regard to the CRSB *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*.

Participating Operator – an entity or organization seeking certification to the CRSB Chain of Custody Requirements.

2.0 CRSB Certification

To advance sustainability efforts in the Canadian beef industry, the CRSB developed two Standards: the Sustainable Beef Production Standard and the Sustainable Beef Processing Standard. The CRSB also developed Chain of Custody Requirements for primary processors as well as those entities higher in the supply chain (e.g. further processors and retail and food service companies) that would like to source beef from CRSB certified operations. These entities are referred to as a Participating Operator.

Certification is the process by which an independent body (Certification Body or “CB”) determines that an entity meets specific requirements. For CRSB certification, this requires receiving an audit from an CRSB approved CB against the applicable Standard, Chain of Custody requirements or approved equivalent. (See section 3)

2.1 Who must be certified?

The CRSB Certified program is **voluntary**, and application is open to all beef producers, primary processors and Participating Operators (hereafter called Clients). All eligible beef producers and primary processors who would like to sell their product as CRSB Certified and contribute to the CRSB Certified supply chain must be audited by a CRSB approved Certification Body against the applicable Standard(s).

Producers and primary processors must also be certified against the CRSB Chain of Custody Requirements if they:

- Perform physical handling activities not included in the Standards, and/or
- Purchase CRSB certified product from one or more other CRSB certified operations.

Participating Operators must be certified against the Chain of Custody Requirements if they:

- Take legal ownership of CRSB certified product,
- Physically handle CRSB certified products, and/or
- Make product sourcing claims about CRSB Certified.

2.3 Applicability

The items outlined in this document are applicable to all Certification Bodies performing CRSB Certified Assessments or approved equivalent. All parts of this manual are considered normative for Certification Bodies, the Oversight Body and Clients.

Auditors assess clients against the applicable CRSB Standard, or equivalent, the most recent versions of which are maintained on the website crsbcertified.ca. Certification Bodies must follow the interpretation (e.g. Auditor Expectations Manual) provided by the CRSB, unless equivalency has been granted by the CRSB.

The CRSB reserves the right to modify any component of the Framework. Subsequent to any changes in the certification and procedures requirements, the CRSB ensures Certification Bodies are given a defined time period to conform to the changes. This transition period is relative to the significance of the change, to accommodate the changes.

2.4 Roles and Responsibilities

The actors involved in the assurance process are outlined in Figure 1.

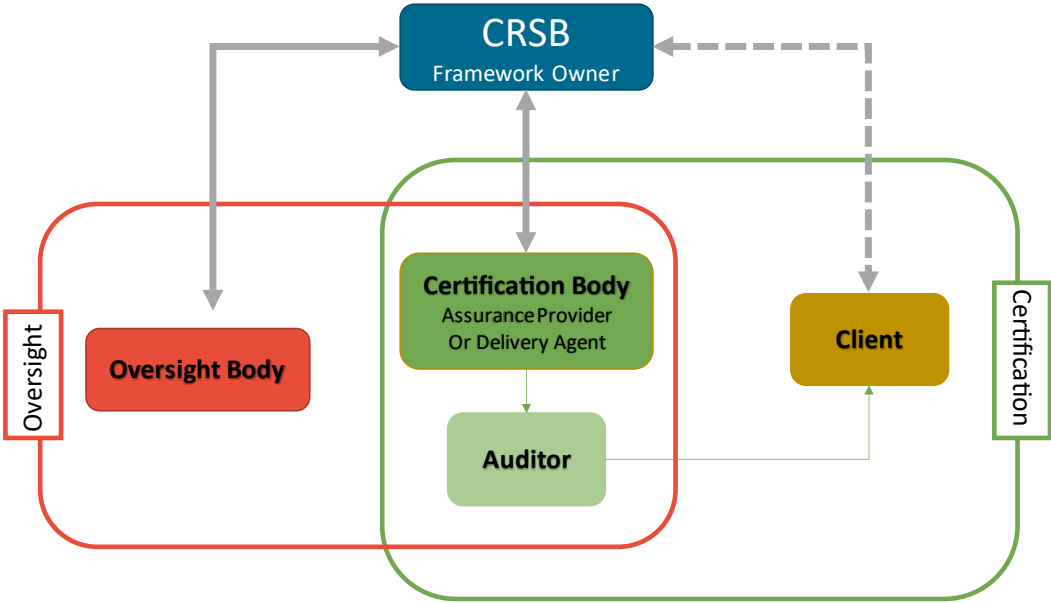


Figure 1: Different actors involved in the certification process.

The specific responsibilities of stakeholders involved in the certification process are:

- **Framework owner** – the CRSB is the owner of the Certified Sustainable Beef Framework. It has overall control and responsibility of the Certified Sustainable Beef Framework, including the Standards, Chain of Custody Requirements and Assurance Protocols, and therefore any decisions relating to the Framework are

made by the CRSB. CRSB sets the requirements for the Oversight and Certification Bodies. CRSB approves Certification Bodies based on the Oversight Body's recommendations.

- **Oversight Body** – the third-party organization hired by the CRSB to review, assess and recommend Certification Bodies for approval by CRSB. Its main function is to conduct oversight of the performance of Certification Bodies and ensure they meet CRSB Requirements for Certification Bodies. It is responsible for the correct interpretation of its Standards, Chain of Custody Requirements, and adherence of its Certification Bodies to the Assurance Protocols
- **Certification Bodies** – the CRSB approved bodies approved to conduct certification services on behalf of the CRSB, also called Assurance Providers.
- **Auditors** – a person who is qualified to conduct audits following the requirements set out in the CRSB audit manual or approved equivalent. An auditor works for a Certification Body.
- **Clients** – beef producer, primary processor or Participating Operator seeking certification or re-certification against the applicable CRSB Standard or Chain of Custody Requirements via a CRSB-approved Certification Body. Participating Operators are also referred to as Clients for the purposes of this document. The full onus of responsibility for compliance with the requirements of the applicable CRSB Standard or Chain of Custody Requirements rests solely with the Client.

3.0 The Certification Process

One of the main goals of the Framework is to recognize and reward the commitment that producers make to raise cattle responsibly and encourage continuous improvement. Clients who want to contribute to the certified supply chain must have an audit from a CRSB approved Certification Body against the applicable Standard(s). The following outline the basic steps for certification. The certification cycle and other types of audits are described in the sections 3.4 and 3.5.

The complete list of certificate and certification procedures and requirements can be found in the Auditor Expectations Manual and Requirements for Certification Bodies.

An overview of the initial certification process is presented in Figure 2.

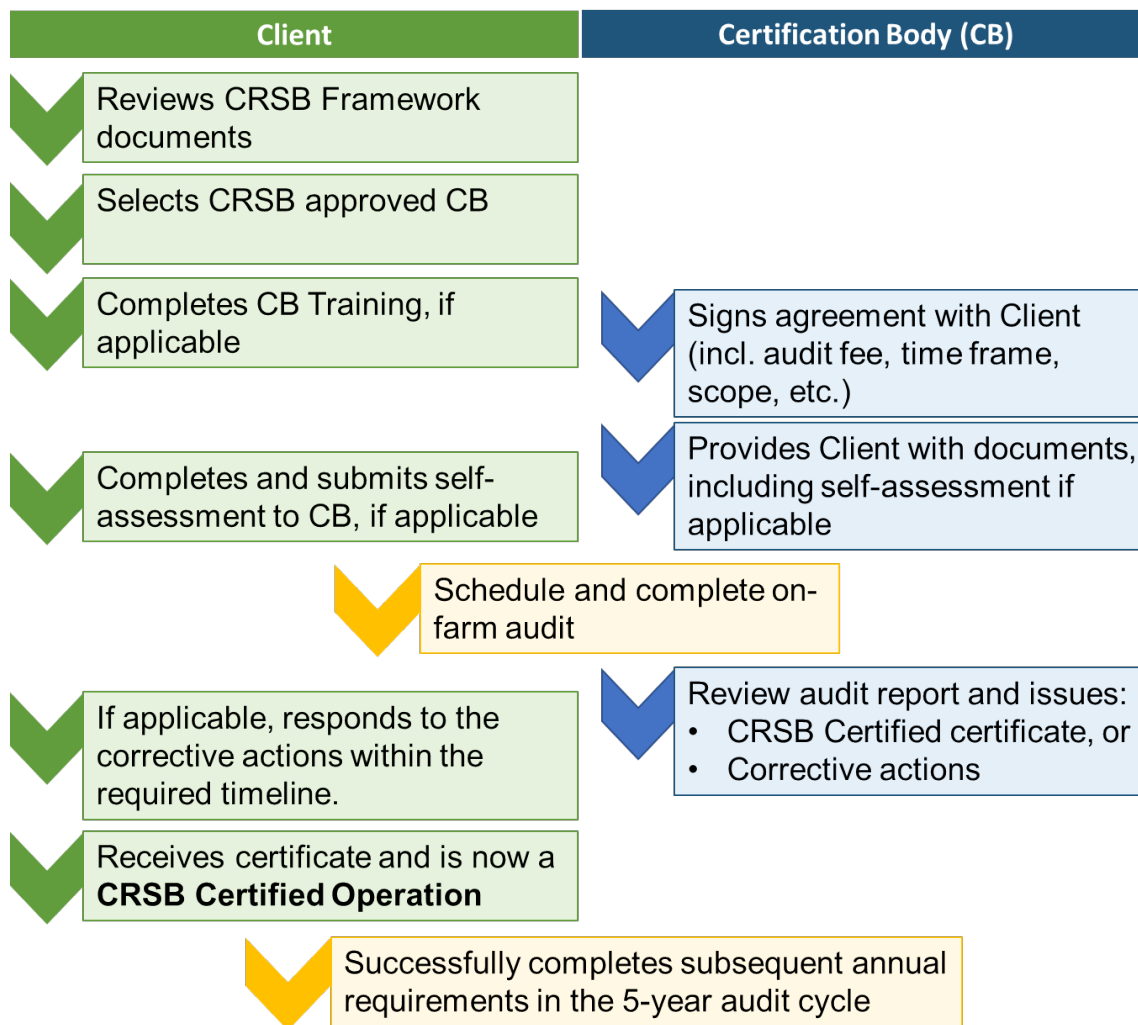


Figure 2: Certification Process Overview

3.1 Pre-certification preparation and training for clients

Preparation can help ensure a producer, processor or Participating Operator is making an informed decision to get certified and may reduce costs and time of the audit. An interested Client should review the CRSB Framework documents on the website crsbcertified.ca to see where their operation fits in. The website is a valuable tool to direct Client's to appropriate resources and training, including interpretation guidance for the standard requirements.

Audit costs and time are mitigated through preparedness. Once a decision has been made to get certified, the Client selects a CRSB approved Certification Body, which can be found on crsbcertified.ca.

3.1.1 Select a CRSB approved Certification Body

Certification Bodies may have additional preparation, training requirements and tools available. Prior to an audit, the CB shall provide the Client with the latest

normative documents which may include a self-assessment. This can help identify gaps and better prepare both the client and auditor.

The audit scope will be determined based on the information collected when the Client requests the certification audit.

3.2 Audit Process

The CRSB has defined minimum requirements for the assessment to ensure all Clients, regardless of Certification Body selected, are evaluated using the same methods. The complete list of requirements can be found in the Standards, Chain of Custody Requirements and interpretation guides located on crsbcertified.ca. The following outlines the process for producers and primary processors.

1. **Initial On-Site Audit:** The CB's designated auditor conducts an on-site audit, assesses the Client's conformance against the appropriate CRSB or equivalent Standard. Certification Bodies must follow the interpretation (e.g. Audit Expectations Manual) provided by the CRSB, unless equivalency and permission has been granted by the CRSB. The auditor provides a written report to the Certification Body
2. **Review:** The Certification Body reviews the audit report. Based on that review, the CB takes a decision to approve or deny certification. The audit report is provided to the Client.
 - a. If approved, a certificate is issued to the Client.
 - b. If corrective actions are identified, the Client has the opportunity to correct and respond within the timeline laid out in the audit report.
 - c. Once corrective actions are resolved, a certificate is issued.
3. **Certification:** Once a certificate is issued, the Client is considered a Certified Operation. The certificate is valid for five (5) years, contingent on the successful completion of the subsequent annual requirements in the audit cycle. See next section.

3.3 Issuing and Maintaining Client Certificate

Clients are granted a CRSB Certificate by the Certification Body after a successful audit against the CRSB Standard(s) or approved equivalent.

The Certification Body issues a CRSB Certificate to the Client. The CRSB provides each Certification Body with a range of unique certificate numbers.

Certificate numbers follow the format of: 2 letter Provincial Code, 4-digit year, five digit number, e.g. AB2005#####, where ##### can be any number from 0001 to 99,999 inclusive.

The Certificate is the official document that shows conformance with the applicable CRSB Standard, Chain of Custody Requirements or equivalent. The Certificate remains the property of CRSB and may be withdrawn by the CB or CRSB if any non-conformity with the Standard or with any other requirements of the CRSB Standard is found to exist. The Client shall notify their respective Certification Body in writing prior to any changes that would affect their certification to the applicable CRSB Standard(s). Substantive changes by an operation will cause a “trigger audit” by the CB. This may include, but is not limited to, process changes and organizational changes.

CRSB reserves the right to itself, or through third party agents, carry out supplementary audits for the purposes of verifying ongoing compliance with the Framework and/or to determine that, where relevant, agreed upon actions have taken place. See Table 1: Random Audits.

3.4 Certification and Audit Cycle (frequency and intensity)

Certification is maintained through a risk based 5-year cycle that includes a combination of annual on-site audits, records assessments and self-declarations.

Standard audit cycle (5 years)

- Year 1: full on-site audit

The following years must consist of:

- 1 partial records assessment (on-site/desktop, optional)
- 3 self-declarations (not all consecutive)

Certification Bodies shall have a documented risk management protocol to assess the risk level of clients and the resulting assessment frequency and intensity. This may include additional on-site audits.

Certification Bodies are responsible for ongoing assessments of producers in accordance with the audit cycle and risk protocol. Following each annual assessment, the Certification Body determines if the certificate will be renewed or withdrawn. The CRSB also reserves the right to withdraw certificates at their sole discretion with clear rationale.

3.4.1 Guidance on Risk Categorization

- Random audits may be conducted as necessary at the discretion of the Certification Body and/or CRSB and related to program risk.
- Trigger audits are based on high-risk incidence(s) contrary to expected program outcomes, regulatory infraction, negative legal action, significant change in management system or complaints that can be substantiated.
- Audit cycle plus 2 months (60 days) between audit and re-certification audit maximum.

The following shall be considered and used to provide rationale as to the risk categorization:

- performance and number of corrective actions on the critical indicators (for Beef Producers and Primary Processors)
- Risk to watershed health, manure control, food safety, worker health and safety, animal care, crop input use
- performance on previous assessments (if applicable)

3.5 Audit Types and Purposes

There are different types of audits, for different purposes within the certification process. This determines who needs to be involved and who pays. These are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Audit Types and Descriptions

Type of Audit		Involved Parties
On-site	<p>Definition: On-site audit conducted by a Certification Body auditor to assess conformance to the CRSB standard or approved equivalent. An onsite audit can also be triggered by a change in management or ownership.</p> <p>Occurrence: based on risk category.</p>	<p>Pays: Client</p> <p>Conducted by: Certification Body</p>
Partial Records Assessment	<p>Definition: The Client must provide select records to the Certification Body by email, video conference, or mail by a particular date specified. This can also be provided on-site if requested by the Client. This is a cost-efficient way to provide second or third-party assurance on an annual basis, while reducing the time burden and cost to the Client.</p>	<p>Pays: Client</p> <p>Conducted by: Certification Body</p>

	Occurrence: based on risk category.	
Full Records Assessment	<p>Definition: The Client must provide all records required for CRSB certification to the Certification Body by email, video conference, or mail by a particular date specified. This can also be provided on-site if requested by the Client. This is a cost-efficient way to provide second or third-party assurance on an annual basis, while reducing the time burden and cost to the Client.</p> <p>Occurrence: based on risk category.</p>	<p>Pays: Client</p> <p>Conducted by: Certification Body</p>
Self-Declaration	<p>Definition: The Client must complete a self-declaration and submit by electronically or by mail by the date specified by the Certification Body to maintain certified status.</p> <p>Occurrence: based on risk category.</p>	<p>Pays: Client</p> <p>Conducted by: Certification Body</p>
Random Audit	<p>Definition: A sampling of certified operations selected by the Certification Body and reported to CRSB to enhance rigour or used to check on specified aspects of an auditor or Client's performance. Or a quality assurance audit initiated by CRSB. Random audits do reset the cycle timing and are used to enhance credibility of the conformance system.</p>	<p>Pays: Based on scenario (Certification Body or CRSB)</p> <p>Conducted by: Certification Body or CRSB</p>

	<p>Random audits add to the integrity of the Framework.</p> <p>Occurrence: A random audit can occur at any time and may or may not be unannounced.</p>	
Trigger Audit	<p>Definition: an audit that is triggered by: alert of a high-risk situation, flagged by a complaint, or changes that would affect a Client’s existing certification to the applicable CRSB standard(s). Trigger audits do not reset the cycle timing; the Certification Body must report all trigger audits to CRSB bi-annually. Trigger audits add to the integrity of the Framework.</p> <p>Occurrence: A trigger audit can occur at any time.</p>	<p>Pays: Based on scenario (Client or CRSB)</p> <p>Conducted by: Certification Body or CRSB</p>

4.0 Continuous Improvement

Beef producers certified to the CRSB Sustainable Beef Production Standard and primary processors certified to the CRSB Sustainable Beef Processing Standard must meet Achievement level in all indicators that are scored.

Participating Operators certified to the CRSB Chain of Custody Requirements must meet all requirements.

The backbone of sustainability is continuous improvement. The Certified Framework intentionally includes three scoring levels for production and processing to identify achievement and recognize producers and processors who are committed to and make progress on improvements aligned with the five principles of sustainability.

Entry Threshold:

Not yet meeting the requirements of an indicator required for certification. Some improvement is required in order to be certified.

Level 1- Achievement:

Basis for certification on EVERY indicator in the standard.

Although this level is the minimum requirement on each indicator for certification, the auditing process also provides valuable feedback to Clients on their progress and encourages continuous improvement.

Level 2 - Innovation and Level 3 - Excellence

The Innovation and Excellence levels in the certification scoring system are not required for certification, but serve to **recognize significant improvements over time, and reward producers for continuous improvements.**

Outcomes to meet Innovation (level 2) and Excellence (level 3) are outlined for each indicator in the Standard(s).

5.0 Assurance Management

This section provides a general overview of the requirements and process for Oversight Bodies and Certification Bodies to become approved to deliver CRSB certification services. The complete list of certification procedures and requirements can be found in the Auditor Expectations Manual and Requirements for Certification Bodies.

5.1 CRSB Oversight Body

Only the CRSB has the right to approve Oversight Bodies for CRSB certified. The Oversight Body serves the following key functions:

- 1) reviewing and assessing certification bodies interested in delivering certification audits (each a “Certification Body”) for approval by CRSB,
- 2) conducting annual surveillance activities of Certification Bodies approved to conduct audits under the Framework,
- 3) compiling information from their oversight activities, and
- 4) collecting and compiling Certification Body bi-annual reporting and submitting it regularly to the CRSB.

Minimum requirements for CRSB Certification Framework Oversight Body

- Established experience and capacity in managing assurance schemes
- Qualified to evaluate the qualifications of CBs and their auditors
- Qualified to engage in a contractual agreement with CBs
- Qualified to monitor performance of CBs
- Clear policies for appeals and grievance management
- Qualified to manage CRSB data in compliance with relevant data protection and privacy legislation
- Assignment of a central coordinator

5.1.1. Service Delivery Contract

The Oversight Body is required to establish an Annual Oversight Body Program Management and robust Oversight Body Program for Certification Body Assessment.

5.1.2 Performance review of Oversight Body

The Oversight Body is required to monitor their personnel and auditors to ensure they continue to maintain the requirements set out by the CRSB.

The Oversight Body is required to undergo an independent internal annual audit of its management systems. CRSB is informed of the results of these audits in the annual management review meeting, including any recommendations for continuous improvement. CRSB reserves the right to conduct their own integrity assessment at their own cost.

CRSB and the Oversight Body mutually define key performance indicators (KPIs) for the assurance management. See section 7.

5.2 CRSB Certification Bodies

The complete list of requirements for CRSB CBs can be found in the CRSB Requirements for Certification Bodies document.

Organizations or individuals interested in becoming Certification Bodies should review the requirements for Certification Bodies to self-assess whether they qualify to be a CRSB certifier. If they feel they are a good fit, they should contact the CRSB. The CRSB will refer Certification Bodies to the Oversight Body, who will complete an independent review and assessment that the CB meets all requirements. The Oversight Body makes a recommendation to CRSB for approval. The potential CB has the right to appeal if not approved. CRSB reviews the assessment to ensure that the CB meets all requirements to the satisfaction of the CRSB. If the CB is approved, it must enter into a Delivery Contract with the CRSB before offering any CRSB certification services.

5.2.1 Delivery Contract for Certification Bodies

Certification Bodies (CBs) operate according to a Delivery Contract with the CRSB and in accordance with this Assurance Protocol and all other normative documents. The Delivery Contract gives the Certification Body authority to provide CRSB Certification and Assessment services to Clients, which includes assigning auditors to conduct on-site certification audits, administering annual certification assessments, reviewing audit reports and recommendations, making certification

decisions, issuing and handling certification documents, and managing appeals and complaints associated with their certification services.

In addition, CBs must also report regularly to the CRSB. Reporting from Certification Bodies is standardized and must be submitted electronically, see Section 7.

5.2.2 Requirements for Auditors

This section provides a general overview of CRSB's general requirements for auditors. Certification Bodies must have a documented process for selecting auditors, monitoring and evaluating auditor competence, and ensuring consistency in assessment and calibration, according to the requirements laid out in the CRSB Requirements for Certification Bodies document.

The auditor or audit team should have the necessary language skills (English or French) to avoid the use of translators.

Auditors make recommendations to the Certification Body regarding certification. Each Certification Body must have a dedicated individual (i.e. technical reviewer) who reviews these recommendations and makes consistent decisions about granting certificates. This person must be knowledgeable in the CRSB Standard(s) or approved equivalent.

Certification Bodies that are approved will assign one individual who is the contact person and responsible for the CRSB file within their organizations. The CRSB may undertake periodic checking of a Certification Body's and/or individual auditor's compliance with the CRSB's requirements in this regard.

5.2.3 Auditor Training and Calibration

The CRSB works with the Certification Body to train assurance personnel and auditors on standard-related subject matter. This training will be offered via webinar, wherever possible, to reduce costs. Auditors must take an exam and achieve a passing grade to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the CRSB Standard.

Certification Bodies are required to monitor assurance personnel and auditors to ensure they continue to maintain the requirements set out by the CRSB.

5.2.4 Conflict of Interest for Oversight Body, Certification Bodies and Auditors

In accordance with ISO/IEC 17065 and 17021, CRSB approved Oversight Body and CBs shall be structured to ensure separation of activities that may cause a conflict of interest. All Oversight Body and CB personnel shall operate at high levels of professional integrity, be free from commercial, financial or other pressures that might affect their judgment and are expressly forbidden from promoting any goods or

services during audit activities.

The Oversight Body and all Certification Bodies must have a conflict-of-interest policy in place that covers the above clauses. They must require their employees and auditors involved in CRSB certification services to sign an acknowledgement of having read and understood the Conflict of Interest Policy to be kept on file by the respective Body.

6.0 Equivalency Mechanism

As part of its Business Strategy, CRSB is committed to work with other sustainability schemes and initiatives, including relevant quality assurance programs (e.g. VBP+, BIXS). This can facilitate increased understanding, integration and coordination across programs for the benefit of producers by reducing duplication (and costs), adding value and scaling for impact. CRSB will continually review opportunities to align and partner with other sustainability standards and initiatives, which share common goals.

Recognizing equivalencies of other programs and tools either fully or partially is one strategy. This also includes risks because of differences in rigor, transparency and effectiveness.

The CRSB developed its benchmarking methodology in 2017 to provide a consistent methodology for others to self-assess and, and ultimately pave the way for CRSB to grant acceptance towards full or partial equivalency based on independent expert or third-party benchmark. The Equivalency Mechanism is part of the overall Benchmarking Methodology protocol and is based on a transparent process where benchmarks are conducted by both the Standard owner and an Approved 3rd Party (Figure 3). The Methodology includes an Excel based Benchmarking Scorecard.

Existing programs that have been recognized with full or partial equivalency must have a formal agreement with the CRSB. In the instance of Certification Bodies, this may include conducting certification services on behalf of the CRSB in accordance with the requirements defined in this Assurance Protocol and Delivery Contract.

6.1 Length of Validity

The validity of an equivalency is relevant only for the versions of the Standard or tools used during the benchmarking exercise. Following updates to either the CRSB Certification Framework or the benchmarked scheme, a new equivalency benchmark must be carried out again to ensure equivalency.

The current list of equivalent standards are found on crsbcertified.ca.

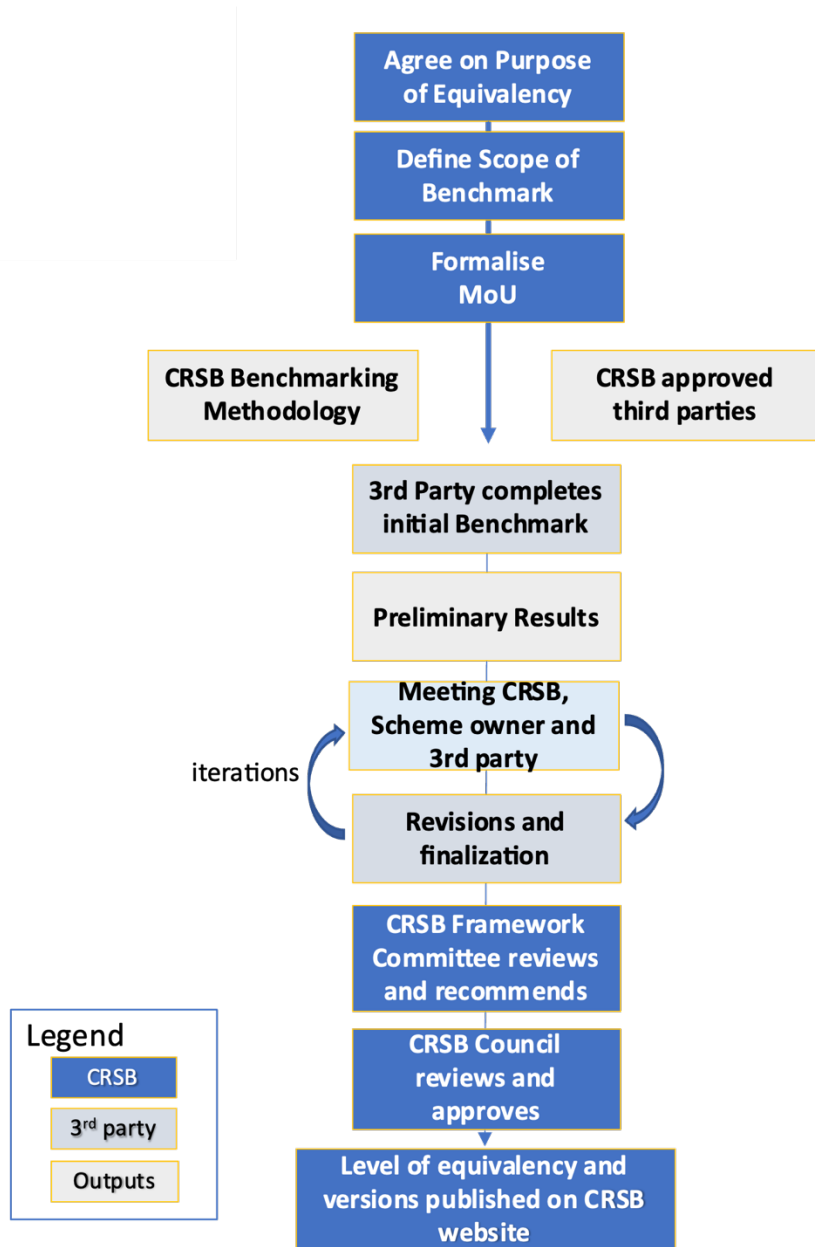


Figure 3: CRSB Benchmarking Equivalency Process

7.0 Data and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

Data are collected and managed through the Standard and Assurance process to monitor the quality of implementation and performance of certificate holders. CRSB's monitoring and evaluation system is important for **external accountability, demonstrating the value proposition to producers, making the business case to buyers, as well as for tracking progress, learning and continuous improvement on what is working (or not).**

7.1 Evaluation and Monitoring of Assurance Management System

The CRSB designates the Oversight Body to review the Certification Body's performance and conformance with the Requirements for Certification Bodies.

CRSB is responsible for monitoring of the Oversight Body's performance based on defined KPIs and included in the service agreement. Reporting to CRSB is bi-annually.

The Oversight Body is responsible for assessing approved Certification Bodies annually to ensure the requirements set out by the CRSB documents and protocols are being met. This annual assessment is required for Certification Bodies to continue conducting CRSB certification services. The annual CB review include the management system of the Certification Body in meeting the CRSB's requirements, the competence of assurance personnel, Auditor training and Monitoring system, Audit report review (review of a sample of audit reports to assess consistency) and at least one on-site appraisal to review the performance of auditors in the field.

KPIs are mutually defined by CRSB for the CBs and reported by the Oversight Body bi-annually and discussed during the management review meeting.

The Certification Body is responsible for ensuring all deficiencies are addressed within the timeframe set out by the Oversight Body as detailed in the Requirements for Certification Bodies.

The Oversight Body will review and share the CB assessments from the approval assessment and annual CB reviews with the CRSB.

A meeting among the Oversight Body, Certification Body and CRSB may take place annually to discuss the CB approval and annual reviews. The latter will include feedback and opportunities for CRSB Framework refinement if significant findings are identified by the Oversight Body. Minutes of meetings are documented, distributed and kept as a record of the review, along with the annual CB review report, and any action items to be undertaken in order to address deficiencies in the process or review.

7.2 Monitoring and Evaluation of Client Performance

This data is at the level of individual certificate holders (clients) but anonymized without identifying personal data. Certification bodies are required to ensure informed consent of the sharing of data for assurance, as well as for marketing and continuous improvement purposes.

Reporting from Certification Bodies is standardized to ensure data quality and must be submitted electronically as part of the bi-annual reporting requirements.

CRSB regularly reviews and analyses this information for learning and communications purposes as part of its wider Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system.

7.3 Data Management

CRSB collects, stores and uses Client data and non-published company data insofar as necessary for a credible application of the CRSB *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*.

CRSB shall store and process the data of the Certification Bodies and Oversight Body for the purposes resulting from the Service Delivery Agreement taking into account the relevant legal provisions and the terms in this document.

CRSB will treat individual Client data and non-published company data as confidential and according to the provisions of the applicable data protection law.

The Certification Body agrees to the publication of its name, logo, address, point of contact, e-mail address and web address on the CRSB website as well as in other media of CRSB.

If the Certification Body provides personal data regarding third parties, for example by naming contact persons, it shall be responsible for the completeness and correctness of such data and shall ensure that CRSB is entitled to use, make publicly available and transmit such data to third-parties within the framework of the execution of the Service Delivery Agreement without violating third party rights. The Certification Body shall indemnify and hold harmless CRSB from any and all claims, including claims for compensation for damages, asserted against CRSB by third parties due to any violation of their rights based on the use, publication or disclosure of such data to third parties.

Any data collected, stored and used by CRSB shall not be made publicly available or passed on by CRSB to third parties. Such data (e.g. including, but not limited to audit reports, completed audit reports) shall only be made publicly available by CRSB or be passed on to third parties if the Certification Body and the respective third party have given their explicit consent to the publication or passing on of this data, or if CRSB is obliged to pass on this information by law or due to official or judicial conditions or orders. The consent of the Certification Body and third party has to be given in writing.

CRSB takes technical and organizational security measures to protect data collected, including any Client data, against loss, manipulation or unauthorized third-party access.

8.0 Complaints and Appeals

CRSB takes complaints seriously and is committed to resolving them as expediently as possible. The complaints and appeals procedure is not intended to verify legal compliance or endorse any activity as meeting any legal requirements that may apply to an individual operation.

The type of complaint and/or appeals determines how it is managed and by whom. Wherever possible, disagreements and disputes should first attempt to be resolved directly between the parties that disagree.

The following details the entities and their roles for various complaints and appeals:

CRSB – is committed to hearing from all parties, but complaints received directly by the CRSB may be directed to the appropriate Body for direct resolution first.

- For complaints and appeals related to CRSB governance and/or its processes, or the CRSB Certification Marks and Claims, and communications contact complaints@crsbcertified.ca.
- For complaints or appeals related to the Oversight Body's decisions or Certification Body's performance please use the complaint mechanism of that entity first. CRSB is responsible for managing and resolving appeals that cannot be resolved at the Certification Body level, and/or complaints related to breaches by the Certification Bodies or Oversight Body. If necessary, contact complaints@crsbcertified.ca.

Certification Body – must have a formal complaints and appeals mechanism and maintain a complaints log. The CB is responsible for managing and resolving complaints and appeals associated with their certification services. Certification Bodies may consult with the Oversight Body or CRSB on decisions and must report all complaints and appeals to the CRSB. CB complaints and appeals are regularly reviewed and assessed by the Oversight body.

Auditors – any auditor who has a complaint or appeal should use the relevant mechanism of their Certification Body, depending on the nature of the complaint. If there is concern of retaliation, then the auditor should contact CRSB directly.

Clients – should submit complaints on auditor or Certification Body performance, or appeal any certification decisions, directly with the respective Certification Body. If dissatisfied with the response, they can appeal to CRSB directly.

The **Public** – Members of the public may register complaints and appeals to the

Certification Body, or CRSB, who will direct the complaint or appeal to the appropriate entity.

Any individual Client of CRSB has the right to appeal a decision made by a Certification Body. They should first use the complaints and appeals procedure of the relevant Certification Body.

9.0 Exceptions Policy

Rules and procedures ensure consistent implementation of the Framework. Exceptions are decisions to temporarily exempt Clients from compliance with particular requirements or temporarily suspend specific CRSB policies or procedures related to the assurance process. These may be due to unforeseen circumstances or events (e.g. Covid) and/or contextual factors that require the need for exceptions to the Standard or Assurance Protocols. Exceptions allow for flexibility, but they are only used as a last resort with a transparent, clear rationale and applied consistently.

Also called deviations or variance requests.

Interpretation of a Standard, or any portion thereof, is at the sole discretion of the CRSB, unless a full equivalency is being offered. Equivalencies are negotiated between the equivalent program and the CRSB. (See Section 6)

In the event that a Standard does not address a specific circumstance, and further interpretation of the Standard is required, the requester shall complete the “CRSB Request for Interpretation of the Standard” form and submit it to CRSB. A requester can be any Certification Body, Oversight Body or individual Client. The CRSB shall review all interpretation requests and provide a final decision in writing to the requester within 30 days of receipt of the request.

The CRSB will post all exceptions and interpretation decisions on crsbcertified.ca. Exceptions and interpretation decisions will be evaluated during the next revision cycle of the Standard(s).

9.1 Process for Requesting Interpretation of the Standard

Any Certification Body, Oversight Body or individual Client can complete the “CRSB Request for Interpretation of the Standard” form (Appendix A) and submit the form to CRSB at info@crsbcertified.ca.

CRSB confirms receipt of the interpretation request and provides the requester an estimated timeline for resolution, not to exceed 30 days from receipt of request. If necessary, a CRSB meeting may be scheduled to review, or to request additional information in order to take a decision.

The CRSB will review, investigate, identify a resolution and notify the requester of the resolution within the 30-day timeframe.

If the requester is dissatisfied with the interpretation, the requester may file a CRSB Request for Revision form for further consideration of the matter by the CRSB.

CRSB records the interpretation decision and posts the decision on the CRSB website.

Interpretation decisions are evaluated during the next revision cycle of the Standard(s).

8.0 References

ISO/IEC 17000:2004 - Conformity assessment — Vocabulary and general principles.

[ISEAL Assurance Code](#) V2. 2018. Code of Good Practice for Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards.

[ISEAL Credibility Principles](#) V2. June 2021.

[ISEAL Impacts Code](#): 2014. Code of Good Practice for Assessing the Impacts of Social and Environmental Standards Systems.

[ISEAL Standard Setting Code](#). V6. 2014. Setting Social and Environmental Standards

Appendix A: Forms



CRSB Request for Interpretation of the Standard Form

A request for interpretation of a Standard, or any part thereof, may be submitted at any time. The CRSB will respond within 30 days of receipt of the interpretation form advising whether the submitted interpretation reflects the intention of the CRSB. If dissatisfied with the interpretation, the requester may file a request for revision for further consideration of the matter by the CRSB.

Title of CRSB Standard(s) Impacted: _____

Section of the Standard Requiring Interpretation:

Provide the reference for the specific section(s) of the Standard(s) for which interpretation is requested.

Requestor's Interpretation of the Section:

Provide the proposed interpretation of the section listed above. You may also want to provide an example of the situation in which you are applying this section of the Standard.

Signature*: _____

Company: _____

Telephone Number: _____ E-mail: _____

Submission Date: _____

**Type written name will suffice as signature*

Email completed form to CRSB: info@CRSBcertified.ca

CRSB Internal Use ONLY

Is the Interpretation consistent with the intent of the Standard?

Yes No

Explanation of the Interpretation Decision:

CRSB provides an explanation for their decision regarding the Interpretation, which references any specific section(s) of the Standard(s) that are related to the issue, as appropriate.

CRSB: _____ Date: _____



CRSB Request for Revision to the Standard Form

Background:

Provide a brief background statement indicating the cause and nature of concern, the impacts identified and any other reason why the revision should be considered by the CRSB. Reference as appropriate any specific section(s) of the Standard(s) that are related to the issue.

Recommendation:

Clearly state what action is needed: e.g., recommended changes to the standard(s) including the current text of the relevant section(s).

Supplementary Materials (photographs, diagrams, reports, etc.):

Submit electronically with your form.

Signature*: _____

Company: _____

Telephone Number: _____ E-mail: _____

Submission Date: _____

**Type written name will suffice as signature*

Please submit to: info@CRSBcertified.ca